

## Martin Luther King "I Have a Dream" Speech

1. Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity.
2. But one hundred years later, we must face the tragic fact that the Negro is still not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. So we have come here today to dramatize an appalling condition.
3. In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
4. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So we have come to cash this check -- a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God's children. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.
5. It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment and to underestimate the determination of the Negro. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have

## Paraphrase of the Martin Luther King "I Have a Dream" Speech [\(U\)](#)

1. 100 years ago the great American memorialized behind us (Abraham Lincoln) signed the document intended to give freedom and hope to the Negroes who had been unjustly enslaved (The Emancipation Proclamation).
2. But now, sadly, we have to see that the Negro isn't free yet. Negroes still are held back by segregation and discrimination.  
manacles= a device for confining hands, usually consisting of a set of 2 metal rings  
languishing= lack of energy or vitality, spirit or interest  
They are still poor even though others are pretty well off. Negroes are outcasts in the country where they live. And we are here today to make that point.
3. We are meeting in Washington D.C. to collect on the promise of life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness made by the founders of this country to everyone.
4. America has, however, backed out of this promise to non-whites. But we think they have the means to keep their promise and that they will be fair. So we are asking for freedom and justice now, because it is really important now, and we are here reminding people of their ancestors' promises.  
  
This is the time to seek payment - full payment.  
Segregation needs to give way to justice, opportunity, and camaraderie -- now.
5. The vital importance of this moment and the determination of the Negro should not be missed by anyone. Negro discontent will remain until he has freedom and equality. This is just the beginning of the quest to get what we have been promised. It would be a bad mistake to think the Negro is just venting his frustrations here and then going back to the status quo feeling better even if nothing changes. Calm will not return until the Negro has received the rights of his

a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

6. But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred.

7. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny and their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.

8. And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

9. I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive.

10. Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

citizenship. Revolt will shake the nation until there is justice.

6. But there is something I feel obligated to tell those who are seeking justice with me. We must behave correctly while seeking our rights. We want to avoid becoming bitter and hateful while trying to achieve our freedom.

7. We must be dignified and disciplined at all times in this endeavor, and not permit our protests to degenerate into violence. We must at all times rise above the use of physical force and meet any we encounter with sheer willpower. Just because we are being militant for the first time does not mean we should be distrustful of all white people. Many of them are here today because they realize our futures are linked together and that if we are all going to be free we have to work together.

8. We also must promise to keep marching ahead on a daily basis, not just now. There is no turning back. Some people ask those concerned about civil rights what it will take to satisfy them. The answer is when we can have hotel rooms when we travel, when we can live outside ghettos, when Negroes in Mississippi can vote, and when Negroes in New York have something to vote for. We will only be satisfied when there is justice and righteousness.

9. I realize some of you have come here from difficult places. Some of you have suffered persecution and even police brutality. Your suffering will bring about changes, and you have to realize that undeserved suffering has redemptive powers.

10. Return to Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana, and to the inner cities of the North, understanding that somehow things will be rectified. Don't give up or dwell in self-pity.

11. I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.
12. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal."
13. I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood.
14. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state, sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.
15. I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

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16. I have a dream today.  
I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama, whose governor's lips are presently dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers.
  17. I have a dream today.  
I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.
  18. This is our hope. This is the faith with which I return to the South. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.
  19. This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with a new meaning, "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring."

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20. And if America is to be a great nation this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania!  
Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of

11. For I can still say that in spite of all the frustrating problems I maintain the American dream.
12. I hope and believe that some day this country will actually practice what it preaches when it says that all men are created equal.
13. I hope and trust that in Georgia the descendants of slaves and of slaveowners alike will be able to be good friends.
14. I hope and trust that one day even Mississippi will become free and just.
15. I hope and trust that my own kids will some day be judged by their ability instead of their skin color.

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16. I think about these things today.  
I also hope and trust that some day Alabama will be a place where black kids and white kids can play together as good friends, even though currently their governor is adamantly opposed to any changes that might make life better and fairer for Negroes.
  17. I think about this today.  
I hope and trust that some day things will be smoother, straighter, and on a more even keel, and that everyone will be able to see the glory of God at the same time.
  18. This is what I hope, and the faith I take back to the South with me. With this desire and trust we will be able to carve out some hope and also convert discord into harmony. With them, we will also be able to work, pray, and struggle, even go to jail, together in order to stand up for freedom which we know will come.
  19. When it does come, all children will be able to sing the words of "My country 'tis of thee" with renewed meaning.

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20. And this will have to come to pass if America is to be a great nation. So let there be freedom in New Hampshire, New York, and Pennsylvania, as well as all the way west to Colorado and California, and south to Georgia, Tennessee, and Mississippi.

Colorado!

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous peaks of California!  
But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia!

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee!

Let freedom ring from every hill and every molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

21. When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! free at last! thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

21. When we have freedom in all these places and everywhere else, everyone no matter what their color or religion will be able to sing together the old Negro religious song that gives praise and thanks for finally being free.